

# **Crime Victims Needs Assessment**

*Prepared for*

**The Wisconsin Department of Justice  
Office of Crime Victim Services**

**and**

**Citizens of Judicial District 3**

*by:*

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# Table of Contents

Introduction -----	1
Summary -----	3
Findings from Key Informant Interviews -----	5
Crime Trends -----	5
Underserved Populations -----	5
“Wishlist” -----	6
Victim Rights Difficult to Enforce -----	6
Findings from Unmet Needs Survey Results -----	8
Who are Underserved? -----	8
Community Coordination and Unmet Needs -----	8
Community Assets -----	10
District Meeting Findings and Prioritization Survey -----	12
Crime Trends -----	12
Assets and Services “Wishlist” -----	13
Underserved Populations -----	13
Crime Victims’ Rights -----	14
Implications -----	16
Appendix A -----	18

# Introduction

In 2005 the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services began a journey to develop a Crime Victim Needs Assessment process to document all crime-related services across the State of Wisconsin and to understand the needs of counties and tribal communities. The goal is to document crime victims' unmet needs and communities' priorities related to crime victim services. As such, this project:

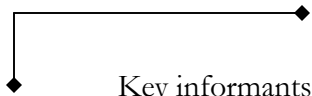
- ✓ Gathers comprehensive/consistent information from Wisconsin counties and tribes
- ✓ Assists communities to collaboratively set priorities
- ✓ Disseminates results in user-friendly format
- ✓ Reflects viewpoints of crime victims

In 2006 World Bridge Research began assisting the Department of Justice with this Crime Victim Needs Assessment effort using an approach called Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR was developed in contrast to conventional research approaches. PAR is characterized by having three primary components: 1) an iterative process for conducting research that includes reflection and action; 2) having community members and stakeholders involved with the research process; and 3) using findings to promote positive community change. These three approaches are interwoven throughout the project design and provide for a richer and more culturally sensitive assessment than a researcher directed traditional approach. Essentially PAR is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it.

*Essentially Participatory Action Research (PAR) is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it.*

To document all crime-related services and unmet needs across Wisconsin, the Needs Assessment project began by interviewing key informants (victim/witness specialists and coordinators, law enforcement agencies [county and municipal], community service providers and representatives from local departments of human services) in each county and tribal community. Appointments were made with individuals and groups to ask them questions about:

- ✓ Community composition
- ✓ Services available to victims of crime
- ✓ Community assets
- ✓ Unmet needs of crime victims
- ✓ The underserved
- ✓ Crime trends
- ✓ Victim rights
- ✓ Innovative programs



Key informants were also asked to fill out a questionnaire about unmet needs at the end of the interview. The survey and interview questions shared some similar topics with the interviews providing an opportunity for the research team to learn the insights and reasons behind interviewees' perspectives. A second round of key informant interviews were held with named victim service agencies and other agencies or groups providing victim services programming that were deemed innovative and not known by victim service grant makers.

To build upon the iterative process for assessment and action, findings from the key informant interviews and surveys were presented at the District 3 Priority Setting meeting on March 19, 2008. The meeting featured two parts – reflection and discussion about the findings from the interviews and surveys followed by a consensus building method using group participation technologies to identify recommendations for funding priorities for crime victim services needs and gaps.

In a final step for the district, the emerging recommendations were incorporated into an internet based survey tool which sought to prioritize the recommendations. Interviewed key informants, participants of the district meeting and all other known service providers in the district were asked to complete the survey.

*The three initial steps – interviews and surveys, district meeting and on-line survey – are summarized in this report.*

The three initial steps – interviews and surveys, district meeting and on-line survey – are summarized in this report.

These key informant interviews and surveys are to be rounded out with interviews and focus groups with victims/survivors of crime, members of underserved communities and representatives of statewide organizations. Also, an advisory group of victims, former victims and survivors from across the state oversees various aspects of the Needs Assessment's implementation.

# Summary

Judicial District 3 is made up of the following four Wisconsin counties: Jefferson, Ozaukee, Washington and Waukesha. Every county in the district was represented in the needs assessment process with 17 individuals interviewed, 15 surveyed, 14 participating at the district meeting and five responding to the follow-up online survey.

The following summaries were created from the key informant interviews and surveys collected in Judicial District 3.

## **Crime trends:**

- ✓ Drugs and alcohol
- ✓ Elder abuse
- ✓ Interpersonal crimes

## **Assets - commonly referred to services:**

- ✓ Domestic violence programs
- ✓ Sexual assault programs
- ✓ Victim/witness services
- ✓ Poverty programs
- ✓ 24 hour crisis line
- ✓ Counseling
- ✓ Legal advocacy
- ✓ Restorative justice programs
- ✓ Private agencies
- ✓ Human services
- ✓ Private therapists and psychologists

## **Underserved crime victims:**

- ✓ New immigrants
- ✓ The “uninsured”
- ✓ The elderly

## **Surveys identified:**

- ✓ Victims with mental health issues
- ✓ Latino victims
- ✓ Victims with developmental disabilities
- ✓ Non-English speaking victims
- ✓ Victims with physical disabilities

**Programs on key informants' "wishlist" include:**

- ✓ Transportation assistance
- ✓ Homeless shelter
- ✓ Domestic violence shelter
- ✓ Emergency housing
- ✓ More mental health services
- ✓ Services for children
- ✓ Technology and training for internet crimes
- ✓ More restorative justice
- ✓ More staff for crisis response
- ✓ More interpreters

**A**t the district meeting, participants reflected on the above findings and used a consensus process to answer the question “What are our recommendations for 2008 funding priorities for victim services?” In a follow-up online survey District 3 residents were asked to prioritize the recommendations. The ranked recommendations were:

1. Sufficient Staffing Please
2. Funds for Victims' Needs
3. Affordable, Effective, Quality Legal Services
4. Systemic Change for Timely Victim-Centered Justice
5. Parenting and Child Safety Programs
6. Comprehensive On-going Mental Health Treatment & Service
7. Prevention & Early Intervention Services
8. Training & Development for Coordinated Quality Service
9. Affordable Temporary and Long-term Housing Services
10. Accessible Transportation for Victims' Needs



A complete depiction of the ideas and victim needs that make up each funding recommendation can be found on page 18.

# Findings from Key Informant Interviews

Key informants from Judicial District 3 representing victim/witness specialists and coordinators, sheriff's offices, community service providers and departments of human services were interviewed in November - December 2007. A total of 17 individuals were interviewed (nine women and eight men) in four interview settings. The following summarizes the themes that emerged from these interviews.

## Crime Trends

Some of the emerging crime trends that were discussed by key informants include: drugs and alcohol, elder financial abuse and interpersonal crime.

Drugs & Alcohol: The role of drugs and alcohol is a topic that was discussed by many key informants. "Alcohol is a huge problem and biggest one facing the police. Nine out of ten victims are using or victimized by someone using drugs or alcohol." It appears that heroin use and the theft of and "misuse" of prescription drugs are increasing concerns in District 3. Key informants indicate that prescription drugs are easy to get from various sources and can be procured for free or little money. Theft of prescription drugs from residential homes is also a problem. One informant states, "prescription drug abuse is the root of many other crimes."

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Elder Financial Abuse: Financial abuse of the elderly is thought to be an emerging problem in Judicial District 3. Fraud committed by relatives or caregivers seems to be on the rise and underreported. One informant states, "[elder financial abuse] has probably been around for a long time, but just recently started being reported." On a similar note, there is a perception that internet theft is "way up" and "most local police do not have the resources to investigate internet theft."

Interpersonal Crimes: Many key informants perceive an increase in domestic violence, sexual assault across the board, teen sexual abuse and violence in general. There is also a perception that the violence is becoming more severe. Sexual assaults in schools, infant death due to Shaken Baby Syndrome, gang crimes and violence among girls were also trends discussed.

## Underserved Populations

In key informant interviews those viewed as underserved include new immigrants, the "uninsured" and the elderly.

New Immigrants: Some key informants talked of Spanish-speaking Latinos, Hmong and



Eastern European immigrants as being underserved due to language barriers and a perception that new immigrant communities want to keep to themselves.

The “Uninsured”: Another group perceived to be the most underserved is the “uninsured.” This is particularly challenging for individuals and families with mental health needs. They experience barriers to services due to lack of insurance.

#### Elderly

It is noted that many elders are experiencing financial problems and the barriers that exist are that there are often a lack of services and that elders often do not use services if available.

### **“Wishlist”**

When asked what kinds of services victims are commonly referred to for assistance and support, many key informants indicate: domestic violence programs, sexual assault programs, victim/witness services, poverty programs, 24 hour crisis line, counseling, legal advocacy, restorative justice programs, private agencies, human services, private therapists and psychologists. By far the biggest barrier to service that was identified by most key informants is the *lack of transportation* available.

On the same note, key informants also identified programs and services they wish they had available in their local community:

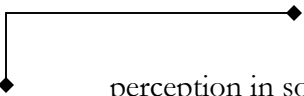
1. Transportation assistance
2. Homeless shelter
3. Domestic violence shelter
4. Emergency housing
5. More mental health services
6. Services for children
7. Technology and training for internet crimes
8. More restorative justice
9. More staff for crisis response
10. More interpreters

Assets key informants wish were available include:

- ✓ Affordable housing

### **Victim Rights Difficult to Enforce**

Most informants discussed the victim rights notification process used in their community. When asked about which rights were difficult to enforce “*restitution as allowed by law*” and “*a civil judgment for unpaid restitution*” was discussed quite a bit. There is a



perception in some communities that restitution is never paid and that there are no programs set up for collection. One informant states, “Victims not getting restitution or letters of apology are the two biggest complaints [by victims].” Educating judges about these issues is seen as a solution.

“*Timely disposition of case*” is another right that appeared difficult to enforce. Scheduling delays by the courts and the defense attorneys are seen to be a huge problem. Victim/witness coordinators also discussed the various problems in locating victims following some crimes.

# Findings from Unmet Needs Survey Results

Fifteen individuals representing law enforcement, victim/witness programs, human services and community-based victim service programs completed the Unmet Needs Survey in the four counties that comprise Judicial District 3.

## ***Who are Underserved?***

Who are underserved?	N = 15	%
Victims with mental health issues	11	73%
Latino victims	11	73%
Victims with developmental disabilities	9	60%
Non-English speaking victims	8	53%
Victims with physical disabilities	8	53%

When given a list of potentially underserved populations, District 3 interviewees strongly identified the list above. This list supplements the findings from the interviews and points out a few community groups that did not come readily to people's minds during the interview discussions.

## ***Community Coordination and Unmet Needs***

When asked, "On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 and 2 being 'Not At All' and 3 and 4 being 'Very Much', please rate the extent to which you believe that the current service system..." the following represent the majority "**Very Much**" response. Respondents could also answer "Don't Know" or "Not Applicable."

The current service system...	"Very Much" Response	N = 15	%
Provides services that are individualized.	Very Much	13	87%
Is characterized by efficient and accurate communication.	Very Much	11	73%
Provides services that are accessible.	Very Much	11	73%
Is integrated, that is, agencies are by various means linked together to allow services to be provided in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.	Very Much	11	73%

The current service system...	"Very Much" Response	N = 15	%
Allows differing points of view to exist among organizations.	Very Much	11	73%
Shares information about what services agencies currently deliver or are planning to deliver.	Very Much	10	67%
Fosters a "big picture" understanding of the service system and the roles/ responsibilities of the agencies that constitute that system.	Very Much	10	67%
Addresses the issues of trauma.	Very Much	10	67%
Prevents crime victims from getting lost in the complex system.	Very Much	9	60%
Can be accessed at different stages of victim recovery process.	Very Much	8	53%
Provides services that are gender specific.	Very Much	8	53%
Creates opportunities for joint planning across different types of agencies (e.g., legal, mental health, physical health, public safety, domestic violence, child welfare).	Very Much	8	53%
Develops clear community-wide goals and plans.	Very Much	8	53%
Ensures that agencies have timely access to client records in ways that do not violate client confidentiality and/or rights.	Very Much	7	47%

When asked, "On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 and 2 being 'Not At All' and 3 and 4 being 'Very Much', please rate the extent to which you believe that the current service system..." the following represent the majority "**Not at All**" response. Respondents could also answer "Don't Know or "Not Applicable."

The current service system...	"Not at All" Response	N = 15	%
Involves crime victims in improving and/or changing services.	Not at All	10	67%
Provides services that incorporate non-traditional approaches.	Not at All	8	53%
Provides services that are culturally appropriate.	Not at All	8	53%

## Community Assets

When asked, “On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 and 2 being ‘Not At All’ and 3 and 4 being ‘Very Much’, please rate the availability of these community assets,” the following represent the majority “**Very Much**” response. Respondents could also answer “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”.

Services and Supports	“Very Much” Response	N=15	%
Food Assistance	Very Much	14	93%
Low Cost Or Free Clothing, Furniture And Housewares	Very Much	14	93%
Senior Center/Programs	Very Much	13	87%
Recreation/Sports	Very Much	13	87%
Health Education	Very Much	12	60%
Mentoring	Very Much	12	80%
Substance Abuse Assessment, Prevention And Treatment	Very Much	12	80%
Early Childhood Programs Like Headstart	Very Much	11	73%
Information And Referral Hotline	Very Much	11	73%
Support Groups	Very Much	11	73%
Family Support Center/Services	Very Much	10	67%
Job Training/Job Treatment	Very Much	10	67%
Mental Health Services	Very Much	9	60%
Violence Prevention	Very Much	9	60%
Services For Persons With Disabilities	Very Much	9	60%
Community Service Learning	Very Much	8	53%
After-School Programs	Very Much	7	47%

When asked, “On a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 and 2 being ‘Not At All’ and 3 and 4 being ‘Very Much’”, please rate the availability of these community assets,” the following represent the majority “**Not at All**” response. Respondents could also answer “Don’t Know” or “Not Applicable”.

Services and Supports	“Not at All” Response	N =	%
Transportation Assistance	Not at all	11	73%
Housing Assistance	Not at all	10	67%
Supervised Visitation Exchange/Exchange Center(s)	Not at all	8	53%

# District Meeting Findings and Prioritization Survey

Fourteen people from four counties (Jefferson, Ozaukee, Washington, Waukesha) in Judicial District 3 attended the Crime Victim Needs Assessment Priority Setting Meeting in Waukesha, Wisconsin on March 19, 2008. The group included four staff from D.A.'s offices including three victim/witness coordinators, seven domestic and sexual assault services staff, one sheriff's department staff, one representative from a community organization, and one health and human services staff. Two staff members with the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services were also present.

An overview of the Office of Crime Victim Services needs assessment project was presented including the findings from interviews and surveys conducted throughout Judicial District 3 during November - December, 2007.

For the meeting, the findings discussed previously in this report were grouped to create a cohesive, flowing story of the interview and survey progress. The sections included: Crime Trends, Assets and Services "Wishlist", Underserved Populations, and Crime Victims Rights.

## ***Crime Trends***

The group was asked to reflect on the crime trend findings. They found themselves thinking and talking the most about:

- ✓ Increase in sexual assaults
- ✓ Lethality and severity of domestic abuse; complexity of the issue with addition of AODA and mental health concerns
- ✓ Teens normalizing violence and assault, going further than before; severity of teen assaults is on the rise
- ✓ Increase in juvenile theft and they aren't caring that they did it

The group suggested that the causes of these changes might be about:

- ✓ Early victimization of kids by family members causes them to act out in the future
- ✓ Youth seem to believe that anything other than intercourse is not sex; heightened understanding of sex and awareness of sex that is desensitizing; exposed to drugs and alcohol younger, and they use more and more intense drugs as they get older
- ✓ People are more selfish today; not concerned about others

## **Assets and Services “Wishlist”**

One participant noted that these four counties are the wealthiest counties in the state. However, the research team indicated that this area did not emerge with the perception of more assets than other areas of the state.

Assets or programs that we do not have:

- ✓ Mental health services
- ✓ Headstart
- ✓ Violence prevention is usually the first to go
- ✓ AODA treatment is mostly outpatient

The commonly referred services were accurate for the group. Some complications emerge regarding juvenile crime and human services and issues of confidentiality. The referrals do not always work for the victims of juvenile crime.

Services or programs the group would add to the “wishlist”:

- ✓ Supervised visitation and exchange center
- ✓ Change the criminal justice system – training comes up but mostly as an after thought
- ✓ For some victims, restorative justice isn’t of interest

## **Underserved Populations**

Underserved was defined as populations that were not seeking services or were not being seen by service providers. It was pointed out that the issue of “underserved” can have a circular quality – providers can be known as unhelpful and so people do not seek services. During the interviews the researchers did not define underserved except to inspire people to think geographically or demographically. The group wondered if the identified populations consider themselves “underserved.”

Reflection on Underserved populations:

- ✓ Victims with mental health issues especially those who are underinsured– it’s hard to find places to refer them for appropriate services; multiple issues of victims has required a shift of how advocacy and case management is provided to clients. Mental health and trauma issues perpetuate each other – as one is getting into balance the other is getting overwhelming. Even insured victims can’t always find quality therapists who are trained and skilled in working with victim issues.
- ✓ Victims who are billed for medical assessments and exams even though CVC

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can reimburse them. This can cause nondisclosure because victims are concerned about paying bills and notifying insurance.

- The group discussed what barriers victims say were in their way of accessing services:
- ✓ No mental health halfway house – need housing after inpatient treatment
  - ✓ Help for parenting
  - ✓ Financial needs overall – can’t get to services or court etc. when needing to keep their jobs
  - ✓ Housing
  - ✓ Criminal justice system or just systems in general are a barrier. The system poses an additional financial hardship or breaks up the family.
  - ✓ Difficult to maneuver transportation system or buses do not run

Some participants indicated that providers see barriers differently than victims.

### ***Crime Victims’ Rights***

**T**he group discussed the following issues with victim rights:

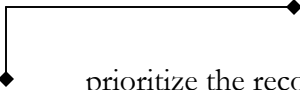
- ✓ Not getting restitution in a timely manner sometimes because people within the system might hold it up (county clerk that won’t cut a check unless it’s above a certain amount)
- ✓ It’s important to reflect that some of the issues raised were not true for all counties in the district – many feel strongly that their systems are doing well
- ✓ Important to look at juveniles differently from adults
- ✓ Issues arise when orders get converted to civil judgments and then the victim has to be the one to try to collect the restitution
- ✓ One county uses grant dollars to pay juveniles during community service hours so they can pay restitution to their victims
- ✓ Status hearings (there can be 10 or 20) – there is no clear place that these hearings are held. The hearings pose a hardship for victims and should not be used unless absolutely necessary.

Solutions:

- ✓ Legislation
- ✓ There’s been good progress and we can keep working at it
- ✓ Wish rest of community cared and wanted to hear about issues that crime victims face; does the public at large know that service delivery is so bare bones.

For the second part of the meeting, participants incorporated the interview findings and their reflections into a consensus process to answer the question “What are our recommendations for 2008 funding priorities for victim services?” The recommendations list appears below and more details are available in Appendix A.

**I**n a final step to understand the victim services needs in District 3, these emerging recommendations were incorporated into an internet based survey tool which sought to



prioritize the recommendations. Interviewed key informants, participants from the district meeting and all other known service providers in the district were asked to complete the survey. Five individuals representing the four counties of District 3 voted to prioritize the needs.

The ranked recommendations were:

1. Sufficient Staffing Please
2. Funds for Victims' Needs
3. Affordable, Effective, Quality Legal Services
4. Systemic Change for Timely Victim-Centered Justice
5. Parenting and Child Safety Programs
6. Comprehensive On-going Mental Health Treatment & Service
7. Prevention & Early Intervention Services
8. Training & Development for Coordinated Quality Service
9. Affordable Temporary and Long-term Housing Services
10. Accessible Transportation for Victims' Needs

# Implications

**T**he first funding priority of District 3 focuses on maintaining services to improve their quality through **Sufficient staffing please**. This priority echoed the wishes of interviewees who frequently mentioned the need for more staff and more services. Clearly the demand for services exceeds the level of services currently available. Participants mentioned high case loads and delays in court processes as evidence that more staff is needed everywhere. In addition, this notion of maintaining and enhancing existing services was a resounding message from the district meeting participants. The concept of “maintain existing services” with victim services funding was included in all of the funding priorities created.

With the second priority, **Funds for victims’ needs**, the community recognized that victimization requires people to utilize services that they often do not have funds or resources to navigate. The need for financial support was identified for specific services such as child sexual assault exams and court interpreters as well as general increases in crime victim compensation and more creative ways to provide restitution to victims. Support for sexual assault exams directly links to the strongly identified crime trend of increased sexual assaults. Community members perceived that sexual assaults were on the rise “across the board.” With more funds for interpreters this priority might enable many of the underserved communities in this district to better access the justice system and assist in holding offenders accountable for their crimes. The need for interpreters was consistently mentioned for this district throughout the needs assessment process. Through crime victim compensation and restitution enhancement many victims would better be able to meet the needs that have arisen due to the crime they experienced. This aspect of the priority echoes the perception of many of the interviewees who were concerned that restitution is “never paid.”

The third ranked recommendation of **Affordable, effective, quality legal services** identifies a victim service funding priority that provides for many crime victims. Frequently victims not only need advocacy assistance to navigate the criminal justice system, but require additional legal services to assist them in civil and family court. Sexual assault, domestic violence and elder abuse victims’ needs were repeatedly mentioned in the needs assessment and certainly quality legal services will assist them in meeting the needs that arise as a result of these crimes.

**Systemic change for timely victim-centered justice** was ranked fourth by district members and during the district meeting participants sought to highlight this priority for its overarching quality. This priority emerged to capture the training needs of justice system professionals to help them be more victim-centered and victim-sensitive. Similarly the priority identifies the reforms needed in areas such as restitution, sentencing and timely court proceedings. Aspects of this priority are echoed throughout the needs assessment process for District 3 constituents.

# Appendix A

The overarching theme could be Systemic Change for Timely Victim-Centered Justice.

Training & Development for Coordinated Quality Service	Parenting and Child Safety Programs	Affordable, Effective, Quality Legal Services	Comprehensive On-going Mental Health Treatment & Service	Funds for Victims' Needs	Sufficient Staffing Please	Prevention & Early Intervention Services	Accessible Transportation for Victims' Needs	Affordable Temporary and Long-term Housing Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Staff development (AODA, mental health, updates)</li> <li>✓ Mandatory training for service providers, law enforcement, probation &amp; parole and others</li> <li>✓ Better response to victims – more coordinated</li> <li>✓ Sensitivity training for staff</li> <li>✓ Ongoing cross training among professionals to improve service coordination</li> <li>✓ Funding for CCR/SART teams</li> <li>✓ Maintaining existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Supervised visitation</li> <li>✓ Funding for supervised visitation/exchange</li> <li>✓ Create child abuse center including supervised visitation</li> <li>✓ Parenting assistance</li> <li>✓ Child advocacy center</li> <li>✓ Maintain existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Legal aid</li> <li>✓ Free/low cost legal services</li> <li>✓ Legal assistance</li> <li>✓ Low cost &amp; effective legal services</li> <li>✓ Affordable quality legal services</li> <li>✓ Maintain existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Case management and ongoing mental health services</li> <li>✓ In-patient or in-home mental health</li> <li>✓ Shelter, half-way homes, housing for diversified populations</li> <li>✓ Mental health services (temporary housing, case management, counseling)</li> <li>✓ Maintain existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Funding for child sexual abuse exams for underinsured families</li> <li>✓ Fund and expand crime victim compensation</li> <li>✓ More funding for United Way (restitution crews)</li> <li>✓ Increase funds for interpreters for victims</li> <li>✓ Maintaining existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ More prosecutors</li> <li>✓ Staffing to increase quality of services</li> <li>✓ More staff for victim/witness, DA and probation &amp; parole</li> <li>✓ Maintaining existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Services to address core reasons for crime (AODA, mental health services)</li> <li>✓ Early intervention with victims and perpetrators</li> <li>✓ Education to at-risk groups (victims/perpetrators)</li> <li>✓ Maintain existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Accessible transport to needed services</li> <li>✓ Transportation</li> <li>✓ Maintain existing services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Accessible housing options</li> <li>✓ Affordable housing (short and long term)</li> <li>✓ Maintain existing services</li> </ul>